Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

CHARLES J. COLE AND LAURENCE M. HARDY. 1983. *Tantilla planiceps.*

Tantilla planiceps (Blainville) Western black-headed snake

Coluber planiceps Blainville, 1835:294–295. Type-locality, "Califonie" (Blainville, 1835:282), restricted to southern Baja California Sur by Smith and Taylor (1950:322). Holotype, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle 818, an adult male (examined by authors), collected by M. P. E. Botta, 1827–1829.

Homalocranion planiceps: Duméril, 1853:490.

Tantilla planiceps: Cope, 1861:74.

Tantilla nigriceps (not of Kennicott): Yarrow, 1882:85 (part).

Homalocranium planiceps: Günther, 1895:145.

Tantilla eiseni Stejneger, "1895" [1896]:117–118. Type-locality, "Fresno, California." Holotype, National Museum of Natural History 11766, an adult female (examined by authors), collected by G. Eisen in 1879 (Cope, 1900:1114).

Tantilla eiseni transmontana Klauber, 1943:71–74. Type-locality, "one mile east of Yaqui Well, San Diego County, California." Holotype, San Diego Society of Natural History 29273, an adult male (not seen by authors), collected by Charles E. Shaw and Cyrus B. Perkins, 6 June 1938.

Tantilla planiceps eiseni: Tanner, 1966:134–152.

Tantilla planiceps transmontana: Tanner, 1966:134–152.

• CONTENT. The species is monotypic.

• DEFINITION AND DIAGNOSIS. "Top of head strikingly darker (brown, black) than dorsal body color (beige to light brown); dark head cap extending ventrolaterally 0.5–2 scales below angle (corner) of mouth; supralabial 5 with some dark pigment (usually at least 10% of area); supralabial 6 with dark pigment (usually at least 15% of area); less than 20% (usually 0–10%) area of anterior temporal light in color; dark head cap extending on middorsal line 2–3 scales beyond posterior end of interparietal suture; posterior edge of dark head cap usually convex or straight, followed by light (white, cream) collar 0.5–1 scale wide; often several distinct brown spots along posterior edge of collar; origin of m. retractor penis magnus at subcaudal 30–38; retracted hemipenis extending to subcaudals 9–15; hemipenis subcylindrical to bulbous when everted, not capitate, usually with one basal spine (small to large); no spinules on hemipenis proximal to basal spine; 45–73 spines in 3–5 rows (minimum) approximately encircling spinose midsection of hemipenis, except at sulcus; supralabials 7; infralabials 6; naris usually medial (vertical axis) in nasal; postoculars 2; temporals 1 + 1; mental usually touching anterior pair of genials. Most similar to *T. yaquia*; differing strikingly in hemipenial characters and lateral head coloration" (Cole and Hardy, 1981:212).

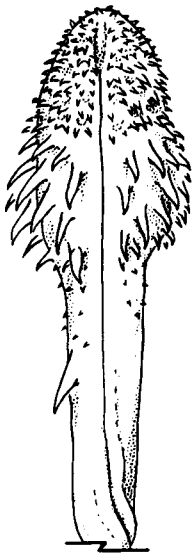
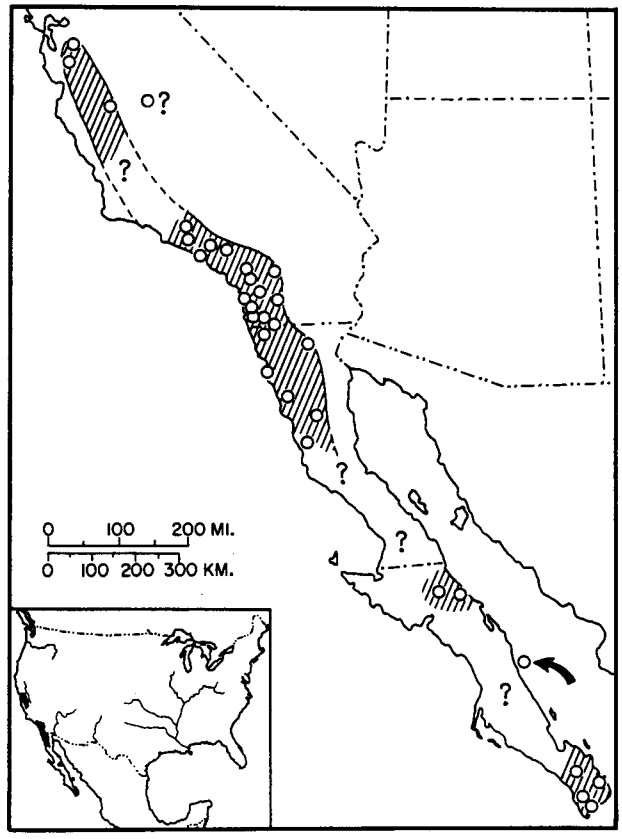


FIGURE 1. Sulcate view of right hemipenis of *T. planiceps*, based on Long Beach State University 1111 (from Cole and Hardy, 1981: 226).

• DESCRIPTIONS. See Cole and Hardy (1981) for a redescription of the holotype (including description of hemipenis); general descriptions of size, coloration (including a quote from Van Denburgh, 1922:877), hemipenes, scutellation, and maxillae; and analyses of geographic variation.

• ILLUSTRATIONS. Cole and Hardy (1981) illustrated scutellation and color pattern of the head and neck, geographic distribution, and a hemipenis. Color illustrations are presented by Shaw and Campbell (1974, pl. 50; labeled *T. p. eiseni*), Staedeli (1972, p. 18; labeled *T. e. eiseni*), Stebbins (1972, pl. 6d), and Stebbins (1966a, pl. 3d; labeled *T. eiseni*). Good black-and-white photographs were presented by Van Denburgh (1922, pl. 97; labeled *T. eiseni*). Drawings of scutellation and color pattern of the head and neck were presented by Tanner (1966, Figs. 1D–F; labeled *T. p. transmontana, T. p. planiceps,* and *T. p. eiseni,* respectively), Stebbins (1966b, pl. 35; labeled *T. p. eiseni*), and Stebbins (1954, fig. 48; labeled *T. eiseni*).

• DISTRIBUTION. "Southern California in the United States, and Baja California, Mexico" (Cole and Hardy, 1981:212). Although some gaps in the range probably reflect inadequate collecting, others may indicate a relictual distribution pattern. These are highly secretive and fossorial snakes, most individuals being found beneath rocks or other objects, "principally in the Lower and Upper Sonoran life-zones in arid and semiarid environments" (Stebbins, 1954:450). Habitat notes are published for specimens found in chaparral (Banta and Morafka, 1968), grassland and an



MAP. Open circles indicate localities from which we examined specimens (Cole and Hardy, 1981:278–279). Questioned locality (Fresno, California) may be a shipping point rather than a valid locality. Type-locality is too indefinite to plot.

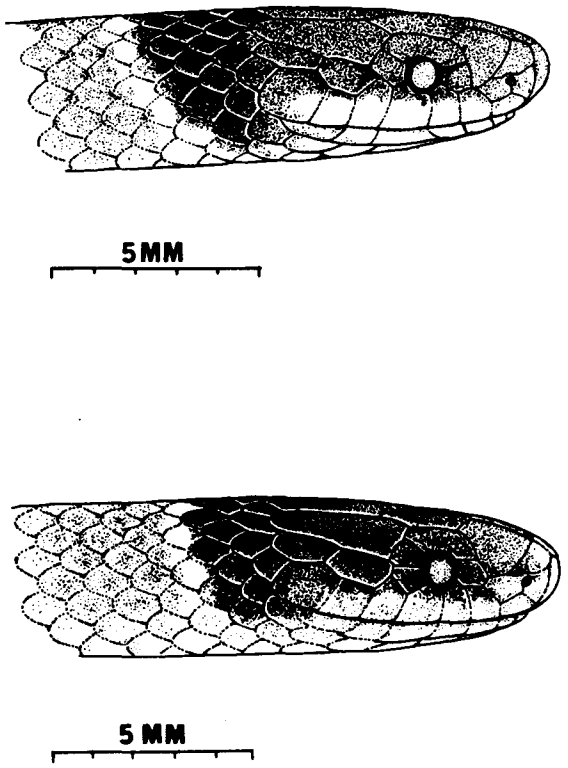


FIGURE 2. Color pattern of head and neck of *Tantilla planiceps*; upper, American Museum of Natural History 97174, from Baja California Sur; lower, American Museum of Natural History 93381, from California (from Cole and Hardy, 1981:210).

ecotone between it and "oakwoodland-chaparral" (Sullivan, 1981), and desert (Klauber, 1939; Bostic, 1971).

• FOSSIL RECORD. None.

• PERTINENT LITERATURE. The most recent taxonomic revision, including a review of the biological literature known for this species, was presented by Cole and Hardy (1981); see COMMENT.

• ETYMOLOGY. Blainville (1835:294) referred to the flat head in naming this species, so we conclude he derived the specific epithet (*planiceps*) from the Latin *plānus* (flat) and *caput* (head); see Brown (1956).

COMMENT

Prior to the most recent taxonomic revision by Cole and Hardy (1981), several other species (*T. atriceps*, *T. hobartsmithi*, and *T. yaquia*) had been considered as conspecific with *T. planiceps* (e.g., see Tanner, 1966). Prior to being synonymized with *T. planiceps*, the name *T. eiseni* was applied to specimens from California and northern Baja California. Because of the taxonomic confusion that has existed, literature pertaining specifically to this species is best sought in our revision (1981).

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